

**Children's
Health
Matters™**

An outreach and advocacy program to facilitate enrollment in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program and to ensure access to quality health care

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September 21, 2004

The Honorable John D. Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2215

Dear Representative Dingell:

As strong supporters of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the members of *Children's Health Matters* would like to ask for your support of HR 4936, the "Children's Health Protection and Improvement Act of 2004." HR 4936 will help guarantee that funds allocated to SCHIP do not expire and revert back to the federal treasury. We believe it is critical that this legislation be enacted before Congress adjourns for the year.

Children's Health Matters is a collaborative effort among Catholic health facilities and Catholic social service agencies that works nationally and at the state level to ensure as many eligible children as possible are enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP. Since 1999, *Children's Health Matters* has enrolled over 330,000 children across the nation in Medicaid and SCHIP programs.

SCHIP plays a vital role in ensuring that children have access to health care. In fact, close to six million children, who would otherwise have gone without health insurance, received coverage in 2003. However, recent studies show that as many as seventeen states are projected to have exhausted their federal funding by fiscal year 2007, and the number of children insured through SCHIP is expected to fall by more than 200,000 by 2007.

Last year, Congress sensibly acted to prevent \$2.7 billion in SCHIP funds from being returned to the federal treasury. Although this legislation was extremely helpful it presented only a temporary solution and did not ensure that all available funds would remain in the program through FY2007. HR 4936 would correct this by preventing nearly \$1.1 billion from reverting back to the treasury at the end of this fiscal year, and by reallocating a portion of the expiring funds to states that need them the most. Most importantly, HR 4936 will also ensure that no other federal SCHIP funds expire and revert to the Treasury through the end of 2007.

In passing the SCHIP legislation Congress made a significant step forward in an effort toward accessible and affordable health care for children. Allowing any SCHIP funds to revert back to the federal treasury would be detrimental to our nation's efforts to reduce the ranks of the uninsured. Therefore, we hope that Congress will take swift action on the legislation, and we ask for your full support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Smith".

Lisa Atchison Smith
Director of Children's Health Matters